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Strengthening of the United Nations system

Questions relating to information

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report describes the recent activities of the Department of Public Information and the implementation of the recommendations contained in resolution 57/130 B of 11 December 2002.

The report recalls the new mission statement of the Department, which is its guiding precept, as well as its revised operating model. It explains the Department's new organizational structure, which is aligned to a proposed new four-part subprogramme structure: strategic communications services (subprogramme 1); news services (subprogramme 2); library services (subprogramme 3); and outreach services (subprogramme 4).

As part of its strategic communications services, the Department has developed thematic communications campaigns using its multimedia outlets, outreach to civil society, private sector partnerships and, at the local level, the United Nations information centres. The Department has continued to provide support for the information components of peacekeeping, peace-building and other political missions. The network of United Nations information centres, services and offices around the world developed annual work plans for 2003 and promoted the work of the Organization at the country level, using traditional and modern means of communication, as appropriate, to strengthen their outreach to larger segments of the public.

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As part of the news services of the Department, the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General has continued to be the conduit for the Organization's official position on matters in the headlines. The United Nations web site, which is expected to receive nearly 2.5 billion accesses in 2003, is enhancing the Department's ability to communicate with media around the world on important news developments in the United Nations system. Traditional means of communication continue to be a focus of the Department's outreach, with the live radio project now firmly established and its worldwide reach confirmed. The Department has continued to provide coverage through United Nations Television — as well as in press releases — of meetings, conferences and special events at Headquarters and to produce television magazine programmes.

Under library services, the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries, which was established in February 2003, is developing special initiatives to create a dynamic, synergetic and fully functional network of library services throughout the Organization. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has continued to improve its web site and has increased its outreach to and through the depository library system. It has continued its emphasis on training and has enhanced multilingualism in its outputs.

Outreach services have a new focus on educational outreach, with the *UN Chronicle* establishing its home page as a portal for that purpose. The "UN Works" programme continued to put a human face on the work of the United Nations. The annual training programme for broadcasters from developing countries and the United Nations Cyberschoolbus web site are also important features of the Department's work in that area. Outreach to non-governmental organizations was strengthened during the reporting period, especially to those in developing countries. The Department has also undertaken a wide range of promotional campaigns for United Nations publications.

The present report also describes progress in the implementation of the proposal for the regionalization of United Nations information centres, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002. It provides, in particular, details on the implementation phase of the plan for Western Europe.

The report concludes that the Department is continuing to give priority to the establishment of a culture of performance management through a process of regular evaluation aimed at ensuring that United Nations information products and services are effective and targeted and that they achieve the greatest possible public impact. The Department will continue to bring the United Nations closer to the peoples of the world, in partnership with the media and civil society, and with the support of Member States.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 57/130 B of 11 December 2002, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session and to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the resolution. The present report, which covers the period from July 2002 to July 2003, is submitted in response to resolution 57/130 B and updates the information already provided. It also describes progress in the implementation of the proposal for the regionalization of United Nations information centres as requested in paragraph 15 of resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002.[1]

2. Five reports were introduced by the Department for consideration by the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session, held from 28 April to 9 May 2003 (A/AC.198/2003/2-A/AC.198/2003/6). A report of the Office of the Internal Oversight Services on the review of the structure and operations of United Nations information centres (see A/57/747) was introduced by a representative of the Office. The Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information presented additional substantive information in his opening statement to the Committee. The deliberations of the Committee are reflected in its report to the General Assembly.[2]

II. Overview

3. The Department of Public Information has instituted a major reform of its structure and its operating methods. A comprehensive review on the management and operations of the Department of Public Information was undertaken in 2002, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001. Initial results of that review were submitted to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session, in April-May 2002, in the report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2002/2). A final report containing the principal conclusions of the comprehensive review and subsequent recommendations was submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session as part of the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change (A/57/387 and Corr.1).

4. Those conclusions and the recommendations, aimed at improving the effective and targeted delivery of public information activities, including through the restructuring of the Department of Public Information, were welcomed by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/300. The Secretary-General reported on the steps taken to reposition the Department to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session, in April-May 2003, in his report on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2003/2).

5. The Department of Public Information's new operating structure is now in place and, as a result of the implementation of the reform measures, the Department has undergone a thorough renewal. Its mission statement has been reformulated, a new operating model has been set in place and it now operates under a new organizational structure. Consequently, its messages are more focused, its target

audiences better identified, its resources are now prioritized among its many mandated activities and certain outputs that are no longer useful or need improvement have been identified. The Department's organizational structure is now aligned with its subprogrammes, bringing greater consistency to its work programme and budget allocations.

6. At the core of the renewed Department of Public Information is the new mission statement:

> "The Department of Public Information's mission is to help fulfil the substantive purposes of the United Nations by strategically communicating the activities and concerns of the Organization to achieve the greatest public impact."

That statement recognizes that the Department's work is not an end in itself and that information the Department must communicate is generated by the substantive work of the Organization. In adhering to its new mission statement, the Department will be guided by the priorities laid down by the General Assembly, in particular the United Nations Millennium Declaration (General Assembly resolution 55/2) and by those established by the Secretary-General. Key priority issues for promotion at present include the eradication of poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic, combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and the needs of the African continent.

7. A new operating model that aims to improve the Department's ability to deliver effective and targeted information programmes has been created to achieve that mission. According to the model, content emanates from the other departments and offices of the Secretariat and from other entities of the United Nations system, while content coordination and refinement, as well as presentation and distribution, are the responsibility of the Department. The Department's part of the process is developed in close cooperation with Member States, the media and civil society partners.

8. The Department has been restructured to better suit it to the new concept of operations. As at November 2002, its responsibilities were divided among three divisions: the Strategic Communications Division, the News and Media Division and the Outreach Division. The structure is aligned to a proposed new four-part subprogramme structure: strategic communications services (subprogramme 1); news services (subprogramme 2); library services (subprogramme 3); and outreach services (subprogramme 4).

9. Under subprogramme 1, the Strategic Communications Division will be responsible for devising and disseminating United Nations messages. The Division will develop communications strategies to promote key United Nations priorities, using the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals as its guides, in close cooperation with the relevant substantive areas of the United Nations system.

10. Under subprogramme 2, the News and Media Division and the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General will be responsible for the delivery of timely, accurate, objective and balanced news and information to media and other audiences worldwide, using both traditional media and new information technologies, including the Internet.

11. Under subprogramme 3, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library of the Outreach Division will facilitate access to timely and up-to-date library products and services for use by the permanent missions of Member States, the Secretariat, researchers and depository libraries worldwide.

12. Under subprogramme 4, the Outreach Division will undertake outreach efforts targeted at key intermediaries, such as non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and other representatives of civil society, in order to promote awareness of the role and work of the United Nations on priority issues and to inform and influence the public.

13. The Department is convinced that it must make full use of all available channels of communication if it is to fulfil its mandates. The development of new information technology has created enormous opportunities for reaching out to new audiences, especially in the developed world. At the same time, it is fully aware that traditional means of communication, such as radio, remain paramount in developing countries. In order to maximize its capacity to deliver messages globally, the Department is working to develop synergies between the new technology and traditional means of communication.

14. A key issue facing the United Nations in the period under review was the Iraq crisis. The political action undertaken at the United Nations during the crisis resulted in intense media and public scrutiny of the Organization and the need to respond to that scrutiny presented a major challenge for the Department of Public Information. The Department used every means at its disposal to increase global awareness and understanding of the multiple roles of the United Nations in the Iraq crisis and to ensure that important United Nations activities in many other critical areas were not forgotten.

15. At the beginning of the Iraq crisis, in 2002, the Department of Public Information established a system-wide, inter-agency communications task force to ensure that United Nations information-gathering processes were coordinated and to develop a joint communications strategy that would provide the United Nations system with a rapid public information response to the rapidly changing situation. Regular media guidance and talking points were issued to United Nations officials around the world. Initially, that guidance drew attention to the need to abide by the Charter and to seek a peaceful solution. It therefore concentrated on the role of the United Nations weapons inspectors and on the Security Council process. Once the conflict began, the Department changed its focus, producing messages on the protection of Iraqi civilians and the need to meet their humanitarian requirements, as well as on the preservation of Iraqi sovereignty and territorial integrity. At present the focus is on rebuilding a post-war Iraq.

III. Strategic communications services

A. Thematic communications campaigns

16. With communications placed at the heart of the strategic management of the United Nations, the Department has remained fully engaged in thematic communications campaigns, using all the assets at its disposal, including its multimedia outlets, outreach to civil society, private sector partnerships and, at the

local level, the United Nations information centres. Building on the experience and success of the previous campaigns for global conferences and working in close consultation with relevant substantive departments and system-wide partners, the Department has devised issue-driven communications strategies in connection with several major international conferences and global observances.

17. The Department was instrumental in the successful campaign to promote the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002,[3] using in particular radio, television and the Internet. It prepared a press kit, brochures, press releases and media advisories, organized press conferences, carried out outreach with journalists and non-governmental organizations and ran the media operation at the Summit itself for the 4,000 media representatives present. For the first time ever, in June 2003 the Department organized a multi-site press launch for the *World Economic and Social Survey*, organizing press conferences and interviews in New York, Geneva and Santiago, resulting in substantial and widespread media coverage. The Department also lent promotional support to the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council held in Geneva on promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development.

18. In its advocacy of the advancement of women, the Department continued its ongoing multimedia communications activities to support the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.[4] A main focus of the Department's information activities on women was its coverage and promotion to the media and non-governmental organizations of the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and the sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as well as organizing and publicizing International Women's Day 2003, on the theme "Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals".

19. The Department's efforts to promote the second two-week session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, held in New York from 12 to 24 May 2003, included the production of a brochure, media outreach, daily press releases, press conferences, radio interviews and an exhibit containing indigenous art from around the world, including interactive demonstrations by artists and a display of a series of public service announcements on endangered indigenous languages under the "UN Works" campaign.

20. The General Assembly's call for the United Nations to enhance its public information activities in support of development in Africa has led to a range of activities by the Department. During the General Assembly review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (General Assembly resolution 46/151, annex), the Department engaged the international and Africa-based media in the major issues under review and distributed copies of an information kit on the independent evaluation of the New Agenda. With the General Assembly's approval of the New Partnership for Africa's Development as the main framework for international cooperation with Africa, the Department has sought to publicize widely the priorities and activities of the New Partnership within Africa and to implement it internationally. The magazines *Africa Recovery* and *Afrique relance* continued to serve as a valuable means of promoting African issues and concerns. The Department successfully offered articles prior to publication in *Africa Recovery* on an exclusive basis to daily publications and web sites run by non-United Nations media and several articles were widely picked up.

21. Promotional campaigns were also coordinated through the United Nations Communications Group. That common communications platform, created in January 2002, holds an annual session, chaired on a rotating basis among its members, and provides a weekly forum for consultation and coordination on the communications policies, issues and programmes of the United Nations system. A good example of the new partnership is the communications strategy developed for the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003 and in Tunis in 2005, by a task force involving the members of the Communications Group. The strategy is being implemented jointly by the International Telecommunications Union and the Department of Public Information, in close consultation with partners within the United Nations system. The annual session of the Communications Group was held in New York on 23 and 24 June 2003 under the chairmanship of the Director of Communications of the United Nations Development Programme. A total of 32 agencies, programmes and offices of the United Nations, along with the Department of Public Information, took part in the meeting, which provided a forum for a broad discussion on information strategies to be adopted in the evolving political and media environment. The Department is also working towards engaging the media as stakeholders in the information society and emphasizing the role of freedom of speech and of the press. In that connection, the Department is organizing, in association with the television industry and Switzerland, a parallel event at the first phase of the Summit in 2003, the World Electronic Media Forum, which will focus on the role of the electronic media in the information society. Another task force of the Communications Group is spearheading global efforts to publicize the International Year of Freshwater, 2003.

22. The Department continued to initiate and coordinate activities on the subject of human rights. A global promotional and information campaign to promote the results of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, from 31 August to 8 September 2001,[5] was developed and implemented by the Department in close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. For the first time, a press kit to publicize the work of the Commission on Human Rights was produced in close collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

23. The question of Palestine continued to remain a major focus of the Department. An international media seminar on peace in the Middle East, the eleventh in a series launched in 1991, was organized in Copenhagen on 17 and 18 July 2002. Media representatives and experts discussed the question of peace in the Middle East. Under its annual training programme for Palestinian media practitioners, the Department brought together a group of nine Palestinian journalists in March-April 2003 at Headquarters to strengthen their professional capacity as information media personnel. The Department also issued an updated history of the question of Palestine and the role of the United Nations, "The United Nations and the Question of Palestine", in the six official languages of the United Nations.

24. To promote the International Day of Peace, the Department organized and coordinated, in cooperation with the Department of Political Affairs, the work of a system-wide steering group to mobilize action to observe the Day. To mark the first annual International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, the Department, in cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and peacekeeping

missions, prepared a press and information packet, coordinated media coverage, developed a web site and prepared memorial panels commemorating peacekeepers who had lost their lives in the course of the past year.

25. In the field of disarmament, the Department developed and implemented a communications strategy geared towards the United Nations First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York from 7 to 11 July 2003, in consultation with the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

B. Backstopping peacekeeping operations

26. A long-standing but growing area of activity is the Department's support for the information components of peacekeeping and peace-building and other political missions. In February 2003, it participated in a multidisciplinary assessment mission to Côte d'Ivoire, resulting in recommendations on the public information component of the new mission as the crisis unfolded in that country. To help counter the effects of inflammatory rhetoric and xenophobic messaging in Ivorian media, the Department conducted daily monitoring of the Ivorian press and convened meetings of interested agencies and departments on the situation of the media in the country.

C. United Nations information centres

1. Status of the implementation of the proposal for the regionalization of United Nations information centres

27. In his report on strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for change (A/57/387 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General proposed the restructuring of the network of United Nations information centres in recognition of the need to strengthen the way in which the Organization communicates its messages beyond Headquarters. Specifically, he proposed the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres around regional hubs, starting with the creation of a Western European hub. The proposal was noted by the General Assembly in paragraph 15 of its resolution 57/300 and reaffirmed in a resolution of the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a progress report on the implementation of the proposal with the objective of applying the initiative in other regions, in consultation with Member States, where the initiative would strengthen the flow and exchange of information in developing countries. The present document reports on the current status of the implementation of the Western European hub.

28. On 14 January 2003, pursuant to resolution 57/300, the Deputy Secretary-General, accompanied by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, met with the Presidency of the European Union to discuss the implementation of the proposal for the regionalization of United Nations information centres. The Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information also held consultations with the member States of the European Union as a group on 8 April 2003 in New York and on 9 July 2003 with the group of the Council on the United Nations in Brussels. Bilateral discussions were also held with concerned Member States.

29. Within that framework, on 10 June 2003, the Secretary-General took the decision to proceed with the implementation phase of the plan for Western Europe. This will entail the closure by 31 December 2003 of the nine centres located in Athens, Bonn, Brussels, Copenhagen, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Paris and Rome and the establishment of a regional United Nations information centre on 1 January 2004.

30. The Organization has received offers from two Member States, Belgium and Switzerland, to host the regional hub in rent-free premises in Brussels and Geneva, respectively. After an in-depth study, a number of factors emerged that argued in favour of establishing the hub in Brussels. In particular, it appeared preferable to locate the hub in the de facto capital of the European Union, rather than in a country that is not a member of the Union. In addition, the Department's comparative analysis of the two proposed locations revealed that, while both were important media and civil society centres, Brussels was more focused on Europe, while the United Nations Information Service in Geneva already performed a number of other functions in support of the United Nations Office at Geneva.

31. The Secretary-General therefore decided, in principle, to accept the offer of the Government of Belgium and to locate the regional hub in Brussels, subject to the conclusion of a satisfactory agreement between the Secretariat and that Government. A senior official of the Department visited Brussels in June to review preliminary arrangements with the relevant officials of the Belgian Foreign Ministry, including the proposed location of the hub. This visit provided the initial basis for negotiations between the Government and the United Nations with regard to the offer of rent-free premises with equipment and furniture, as well as other forms of support. The process was advanced further by the visit of the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information on 9 July 2003. As a result, the process of agreement on a memorandum of understanding on the establishment of the hub has been set in motion.

32. The information capacity of the United Nations in the European Union, although structured differently in the new hub in Brussels, will be in a strong position to deliver the United Nations message in the region. The new regional United Nations information centre will be staffed and resourced to work in all the languages of the European Union, but at a lower overall cost than for the nine existing centres. The hub will articulate its information programmes in the 15 member States of the European Union around a common list of United Nations priorities, which will be conveyed strategically through key intermediaries for maximum impact. That approach will lend coherence to United Nations messages in the region and will contribute to influencing European public opinion in support of the Organization. The resources released by the process of consolidation in the European Union will be redistributed to United Nations information activities in developing countries and to other activities of high priority, such as advancing multilingualism on the web site and the evaluation of the impact of the Department of Public Information's major products and services.

33. Recognizing that the Western European public must continue to have uninterrupted access to United Nations information, the Department of Public Information is now developing an action plan to ensure a seamless transition from the United Nations information centres at the national level to the new regional model. The goal will be to ensure the smooth transfer of the accrued experience,

country-specific knowledge, institutional memory, existing partnerships and contacts of the information centres to the hub.

34. Another major Secretariat priority with respect to the process of regionalization has been to protect the interests of the staff of the Organization who are now serving in the Western European information centres, some of whom are expected to relocate to the Brussels hub. To that end, the Department has worked closely with the Office of Human Resources Management to provide the best possible conditions for continued employment within the United Nations system for those who wish to pursue that option or else to enable those who do not to separate from the Organization on favourable terms.

35. With the support of the Foreign Ministry of Austria, the Department held a regional meeting of directors of United Nations information centres and services in Western Europe from 14 to 16 June 2003 near Vienna. The meeting provided a useful opportunity for an exchange of views between staff of the Department of Public Information at Headquarters and in the field and with a number of outside guests on how to manage the transition from the concept of regionalization to its implementation. Those efforts will continue. Regarding its partnership with civil society organizations, the Department plans to discuss with the World Federation of United Nations Associations on how those associations will assume some of the functions currently carried out by the information centres at the national level.

36. The new Regional United Nations Information Centre in Brussels will serve 14 members of the European Union, while the United Nations Information Services in Geneva and Vienna will continue to serve Switzerland and Austria, respectively, in addition to their responsibilities in support of the activities of the United Nations organizations based in those cities. With the establishment of the Brussels hub, the Department will pursue the development of a strong triangular relationship between the hub and the offices in Geneva and Vienna to strengthen the Department's overall information capacity in Western Europe. In particular, efforts will be pursued to take advantage of the large accredited press corps at the United Nations Office at Geneva, which focuses on United Nations issues, as well as the proximity of the United Nations Office at Vienna to some acceding States of the European Union.

37. In line with the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations reform, the consolidation of nine United Nations information centres located in Western Europe into a regional hub is a first step towards applying a similar approach to other regions over the next three years. The report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2003/2) provided guidelines and criteria for the regionalization of the United Nations information centres. The Secretary-General proposes to embark on consultations with concerned Member States on further regionalization, using those criteria as well as the views of the members of the Committee on Information, to guide the application of the "hub" approach in other regions, taking into account the special circumstances prevailing in developing countries. In accordance with resolution 57/300, the Secretary-General will submit a further progress report on the implementation of the regionalization proposal and the possible establishment of other regional United Nations information centres to the Committee at its twenty-sixth session.

2. Regular activities of United Nations information centres

38. The network of 77 United Nations information centres, services and offices around the world has continued to provide a local voice to the global messages of the United Nations on priority themes, bringing the issues on the Organization's agenda close to the day-to-day concerns of audiences everywhere. Moreover, with the adoption of the new operating model for the Department and the resulting integration of the Information Centres Service into the new Strategic Communication Division, the network of the Department's field communications outposts has become an integral part of the planning and implementation of strategic outreach on priority issues, ensuring that all parts of the network deliver the same message, adapted to meeting the needs and concerns of their local audiences.

39. As a follow-up to the review of the structure and operations of United Nations information centres conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, all centres, services and offices have been asked to develop, on the basis of guidance and coordination from Headquarters, annual work plans for 2003 and to implement them in cooperation with local partners, including Governments, local authorities, the media, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Such partnerships have been instrumental in leveraging the efforts of the information centres and have enabled them to reach wider segments of the local public for maximum impact.

40. The information centres often took the lead in coordinating the strategic communications initiatives of the United Nations country team, thereby promoting a unified image of the United Nations family at the local level. Such initiatives included a variety of activities for different audiences aimed at promoting the Millennium Development Goals, issues before the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the International Year of Freshwater, as well as joint observances of United Nations Day and Human Rights Day. In addition, in the developing countries, the centres assisted individual members of the country team in promoting their special observances, in providing public information support for the visits by their senior officials and in organizing the local launches of their flagship reports, in addition to their regular tasks, such as the maintenance of the common libraries and web sites.

41. In addition to the use of traditional means of communication to promote the work of the Organization at the country level, centres continued to rely increasingly on modern communications technology, as appropriate, to strengthen their outreach to greater segments of the public. From 1 January 2002 to 30 June 2003, centres produced over 600 publications in 28 different languages, including press releases, print and electronic newsletters, press kits, backgrounders, newspaper supplements and other materials. At present, 50 centres also maintain web sites in 26 local languages, in addition to official languages. The Department has continued to provide training and technical assistance to the remaining centres to enable them to establish their own presence on the Internet. The centres have also continued to train local media professionals in the use of United Nations information resources on the Internet and have extended the programme to include, in particular, non-governmental organizations, educators and students. The reference libraries maintained by almost all centres also provided visitors with access to United Nations electronic databases and other information resources.

42. Outreach to young audiences has remained a priority at the country level and the centres have been active in organizing a variety of events involving participation by students, including model United Nations, essay and poster competitions, internships and other activities tailored to their interests and concerns.

IV. News services

A. Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General

43. The Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General, which is administered by the Department of Public Information and works in close cooperation with it, conducts the daily noon briefing and keeps the press, delegations and the public informed, not only of the work of the Secretary-General, but also of developments throughout the United Nations system. The Organization's official position on matters in the news is conveyed by the Spokesman's Office through the briefings, official statements, interviews and background briefings. The Spokesman's Office provides transcripts of all the Secretary-General's remarks to the press via the United Nations web site, issues his official statements, posts his daily appointments and writes the official accounts of his travels. The highlights of the daily briefing are also posted on the web site in an easy-to-read bullet-point format. The information from the noon briefing provides the basis for the items posted on the United Nations News Service web site, as well as for other news outlets of the Department of Public Information.

44. From July 2002 to May 2003, the Spokesman held 244 press briefings. His Office also organized 17 press conferences by the Secretary-General, 72 press briefings by Member States and 100 press conferences by senior officials. In addition, it coordinated 129 press encounters and 34 press interviews with the Secretary-General.

B. The United Nations web site

45. The United Nations web site, which has become a very cost-effective medium for the dissemination of information about the activities of the United Nations, continues to grow in popularity worldwide. It reached yet another milestone on 5 February 2003, by recording more than 10 million accesses during a 24-hour period. In contrast, the site had received 11.5 million accesses during the entire year in 1996. (The corresponding figure for 2002 was 1,695 million.) Users from more than 165 countries are viewing over 655,000 pages of material daily. Based on usage to date, the Department expects the number of accesses to the web site to reach nearly 2.5 billion in 2003. It is important to emphasize that those accomplishments were all achieved within existing resources. With the improvement in connectivity, increasing numbers of users from developing countries are gaining access to that important resource. The growth in accesses has been recorded across all official language sites, reflecting both an increasing number of pages available to view and increasing accessibility for users in those languages.

46. The Department has continued its work to strengthen the coordination and management of the web site and to offer guidance to many other content-providing areas, both inside and outside the Secretariat, in support of their Internet activities.

The recent linkage of the Official Document System (ODS) for parliamentary documentation to the web site is an important step towards reaching the goal of parity among the official languages on the web site and has significantly boosted the number of documents available in each language. Since September 2002, over 28,000 documents in the six languages have been linked directly to ODS. This has increased the amount of material now available on the non-English language sites. It is expected that all documents on ODS will be made freely accessible to the public by 2004.

47. The Department is increasingly using the academic community worldwide to expand its language capacity. It has concluded an agreement with the University of Salamanca in Spain, through which the School of Languages has provided over 1,200 pages of material translated into Spanish, at no cost to the Organization. A similar agreement is pending with a university in Egypt and the Department is actively pursuing the strategy with other universities for similar translation arrangements into the other official languages.

48. The Department continues to build on the successful development of the in-house capability for live and on-demand webcasting (Internet broadcasting). Combining the power of television and radio with the distribution strengths of the Internet, webcasting is emerging as a cost-effective communication and information tool with global outreach. During the reporting period, over 4 million Internet users from 150 countries have watched live or on-demand webcasts of United Nations meetings, such as those of the General Assembly and the Security Council, conferences, events and the daily press briefing. The live and archived webcast of the Security Council meeting of 14 February 2003 on Iraq was watched by over 60,000 viewers in 90 countries in a 24-hour period. The United Nations Television channel is now available to Internet users worldwide, 24 hours a day.

49. The United Nations News Centre portal continues to be significantly enhanced, consolidating its function, as the major gateway on the United Nations web site to daily news and information on the activities of the United Nations system. An Arabic-language version was launched in January 2003. The Arabic News Centre (www.un.org/arabic/News) provides continuously updated news and links to related materials and features many of the same database-driven functions as its counterparts in English and French. Work is under way to create similar dynamic database-driven sites in the remaining three official languages, all of which are scheduled to be operational by the third quarter of 2003. That achievement, which substantially advances the Department's goal of achieving parity in the official languages on the United Nations web site, has been accomplished within existing resources.

50. An electronic mail (e-mail) service, bringing news directly to the desks of redisseminators in the media, civil society organizations and academia, was launched in April 2002 and has been expanded to include a similar service in Arabic and French. Since its launch, the customized service has increased its subscriptions exponentially: as at mid-June, there were over 16,000 subscribers, providing another means of multiplying outreach for the United Nations message. E-mail services for the new language sites are also planned.

51. In order to continue building partnerships and closer contacts with influential journalists around the world, the Department is planning another in its very successful series of briefing programmes for senior journalists, this time for

journalists from the Middle East, in October 2003. Working closely with the United Nations information centres, the Department also continues to place opinion pieces by the Secretary-General and United Nations officials on a wide range of issues in prominent media in all regions and in several languages.

C. Traditional means of communications

52. The live radio project on the development of an international broadcasting capacity for the United Nations is now firmly established as one of the important traditional multi-media channels for strategically communicating the activities and concerns of the Organization to large audiences in all regions of the world. A survey requested by Member States and carried out in late 2002 estimates conservatively that, about 133 million people listen to the daily 15-minute current affairs news magazine programmes at least once a week in the six official languages of the Organization, as well as in Portuguese. The programmes are produced five days a week, including on holidays, and are broadcast by 112 active radio partner radio stations worldwide. It should be noted that the estimated listenership does not take into account audiences of affiliate stations of the partner broadcasters. Member States have expressed widespread support for the continuation of the international broadcasting capacity, noting that it is one of the most cost-effective means of communication.

53. In view of its proven successful and cost-effective global outreach, the Department has requested that the live radio project be made a permanent feature of its activities. To that end, the Department is seeking regular budget funding at the current level for the biennium 2004-2005.

54. In addition to the live programmes, United Nations Radio continues to produce weekly taped programmes in nine non-official languages, including Portuguese and Kiswahili. The programmes are mailed or distributed via file transfer protocol (FTP) to several other partner stations.

55. The Department continued to provide coverage by United Nations Television of meetings, press conferences and special events at Headquarters. Produced in-house, the high-quality video material was then distributed by satellite to broadcasters throughout the world through the major television news redisseminators. The television feeds were also available in all live webcasts from Headquarters. The ongoing weekly television news feature series "UN in Action" was distributed by the Department in five languages to broadcasters in more than 100 countries. It is also available as streaming video on the United Nations web site. The established video discussion show "World Chronicle" was aired on cable television stations in some 15 countries. Both "UN in Action" and "World Chronicle" extended their audiences as new television stations formed partnerships with the Department to broadcast its products, including the annual United Nations "Year in Review", available in the six official languages. The partnership with the United Nations Foundation continued with the production of nine additional 5-7-minute television magazine stories on field development projects involving the Foundation and United Nations entities. The Department's important video archives continue to be accessed by United Nations producers and outside broadcasters seeking current and historical footage of the Organization's activities both at Headquarters and in the field. Over the past year, the Department has also

considerably expanded its formal partnerships with major television broadcasters in different regions of the world as part of its active campaign to promote and market audio-visual products.

56. Information on United Nations activities at Headquarters and abroad is also disseminated utilizing traditional print media, such as press releases, in English and French, and the production of the ever-popular and best-selling *Basic Facts about the United Nations*. The Department facilitates access by news organizations and media worldwide to cover United Nations activities at Headquarters and overseas by providing accreditation, liaison and other services. At periods of intense news interest, such as during the general debate of the General Assembly or Security Council meetings on the issue of Iraq, the Department has facilitated the access at Headquarters of more than 600 journalists to United Nations and government officials and to the proceedings of the intergovernmental bodies.

V. Library services

A. Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries

57. In his reform report (A/57/387 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General presented the results of his review of United Nations libraries, together with a series of recommendations for their integration and further modernization (action 9), which entrusted the Department of Public Information, in particular the Dag Hammarskjöld Library of the Outreach Division, with responsibility for leading those efforts.

58. On that basis, the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries was established in February 2003. Working through coordinated management and collaborative policy-making, the Steering Committee aims to facilitate interdependency and foster initiatives to create a dynamic, synergetic and fully functional network of library services throughout the Organization.

59. The Committee meets quarterly and is chaired by the Director of the Outreach Division of the Department of Public Information; its members include the head or chief librarians or other representatives of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the regional commissions, the United Nations University and the International Tribunal for Rwanda.

60. The Committee has adopted an ambitious work plan in the following areas: archival collections of United Nations documents; bibliographic control of United Nations documents; collaborative reference services; collections/resource-sharing; hardware, software and web content; public relations; and small and field libraries.

61. Specific initiatives to be completed during the next quarter (July-September 2003) include an inventory of all United Nations small and field libraries; a multilingual United Nations Libraries Research Gateway on the Internet; a master list of core areas of specialization available at United Nations libraries worldwide, with contact information; induction of the Economic and Social Commission for

Asia and the Pacific as a full partner in the Shared Indexing Programme; an updated Intranet version of the UNBIS reference manual for bibliographic description; a draft set of principles for archival collections of United Nations documents; a list of journal titles subscribed to by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the United Nations Office at Geneva for use during member libraries' annual subscription renewal review; and consortium negotiations for services that individual libraries are currently purchasing on their own.

B. Dag Hammarskjöld Library

62. During the period under review, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library continued to improve its web site in the six official languages to provide access to electronic information as well as materials in hardcopy and to offer training programmes for mission personnel, Secretariat staff and depository libraries. As at May 2003, there were 405 United Nations depository libraries worldwide receiving United Nations documents and publications. Forty-five depositories were visited and inspected by United Nations staff members. Furthermore, in order to improve the effectiveness of depository libraries, a workshop was held in Bucharest in November 2002 for 13 librarians and 3 staff members of United Nations information centres and the United Nations Development Programme from countries of Eastern Europe with economies in transition. Hands-on training was provided in accessing United Nations documentation and web sites.

63. In addition to oversight and training, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library has been giving increasing emphasis to outreach to and by the depository libraries. A total of 183 alerts were sent in two e-mail series, *UN News Update* and *UN Deposit Info*, to over 300 depository libraries able to receive such messages. The Library also encourages the depository libraries to publicize their document collections as well as United Nations themes and usually provides promotional materials to assist them in their efforts. Since 1 June 2002, 10 depository libraries have responded positively, holding events in Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, the Philippines, the Republic of Moldova, Slovakia, South Africa and the United States of America. Requests for promotional items have also arrived recently from Costa Rica and Cuba.

64. During the period from 1 June 2002 to 31 May 2003, the Library conducted 125 training sessions for a total of 631 trainees, including Secretariat staff, mission personnel, government officials, interns, representatives of non-governmental organizations, depository librarians and visitors.

65. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library web page continues to expand, with increasing availability of materials in the six official languages. The translation of material to achieve language parity on the site is provided for the most part by Library staff members, who perform those functions in addition to their usual assignments. The Library reorganized two major Internet-based services during the past year. Firstly, the new UNBISNET (unbisnet.un.org) provides for easier searching of the Library's bibliographic databases and, with the new features included in UNBISNET, the Library has been able to establish direct links from the indexed record to the full text of over 13,500 documents in the ODS, in all languages of issuance. Secondly, the UNBIS Thesaurus, originally posted in beta version (lib-thesaurus.un.org), was officially launched in March, with search and

display of subject descriptors and related terms, together with help and search screens, in the six official languages.

66. During the year, the Library provided official users access to a variety of electronic services, including the *Economist Intelligence Unit, Factiva, Oxford Analytica* and *SourceOECD*, most acquired at concessional prices through the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisitions Consortium.

67. Volume 54 of the *Yearbook of the United Nations*, covering all the major activities of the Organization during 2000, was published in November 2002. The 2001 volume is being printed and work is currently under way on the 2002 volume. An updated CD-ROM package containing the first 54 volumes of the *Yearbook* was issued in July 2002. The Library has also continued to make progress in the retrospective digitization of parliamentary documentation. In 2002-2003, efforts were made to complete the language parity of documentation already digitized in English and uploaded to ODS. Additionally, the Library assisted various Secretariat departments in converting their materials to electronic format. A CD-ROM of Security Council documentation related to the independence of Namibia was prepared at the special request of the Namibian National Archives.

68. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library staff were active in a number of Secretariat-wide, inter-agency and international initiatives, including:

(a) The Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries. The Library chairs three subcommittees of this Secretariat-wide Committee (bibliographic control of United Nations documentation, collaborative reference services, collection and resource sharing);

(b) The inter-agency Knowledge Sharing and Information Management Meeting. The Library serves as the lead agency for the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisitions Consortium (see para. 66 above); and is active in other projects, notably UNCAPS, the common bibliographic database;

(c) The Second Administrative-Level Boundaries project of the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group. As the focal point for the project, the Library contacted a total of 171 national mapping agencies to obtain and/or validate maps showing boundaries as at January 2000, for posting to the SALB web site (www3.who.int/whosis/gis/salb/salb_home.htm).

69. At the international level, a project worth noting is the Global Legal Information Network (GLIN), a database of laws, regulations and other legal information, coordinated by the United States Law Library of Congress. The United Nations participation in GLIN, a cooperative effort between the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat, includes the abstracting, indexing and full-text transfer of legal opinions published in the *United Nations Juridical Yearbooks*. During 2002, the United Nations GLIN team concentrated on updating existing records for the years 1991-1994, full-text file transfer of that material directly to the GLIN server and indexing and abstracting of new records for the year 1995. The Legal Librarian represented the Organization at the Ninth Annual GLIN Directors' Meeting at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., from 10 to 13 September 2002.

VI. Outreach services

A. Educational outreach

70. With the resumption of publication of the *UN Chronicle* in all six official languages, made possible through innovative, decentralized co-publishing as well as cost-effective internal printing arrangements, the quarterly publication has been able to fulfil the multilingualism priorities established by the General Assembly. At the same time, the publication continues to enhance its online editions in English (www.un.org/chronicle) and French (www.un.org/french/pubs/chronique). During the first half of 2003, the number of pages visited at the English *UN Chronicle Online* and the French *Chronique: Édition en ligne* web sites averaged over 50,000 and 15,000 per month, respectively. The English online edition has now begun establishing its home page as an educational outreach portal, featuring web-exclusive articles and providing Internet links and other educational resources on the work of the Organization. This multiplication of the Department's educational outreach efforts is further enhanced both through the UN Chronicle Feature Service, which, with the help of the United Nations information centres, redisseminates print articles from eminent contributors to selected newspapers and magazines worldwide, and through the electronic distribution of the thematic e-mail newsletter *UN Chronicle E-Alert*.

71. The "UN Works" programme continued to put a human face on the work of the United Nations through innovative media and educational outreach that focuses on real people and projects that work. During the past year, partnerships with media companies helped produce original television programming, public service announcements, web site content and public and educational outreach products, including billboard campaigns in cities hosting United Nations conferences. UN Works initiated partnerships with Discovery Communications Inc., in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme, to produce and broadcast public service announcements on its international outlets and develop complementary web content. "What's going on?", a groundbreaking 10-part television series about children in crisis was produced through partnership with RCN Entertainment, a United States-based company. The $2 million production, which is funded by the private sector, explores critical global issues, such as HIV/AIDS, poverty, environmental degradation and conflict, through the eyes of a child and highlights efforts by the United Nations system and its non-governmental organization partners.

72. As part of the Department's outreach to developing countries, the annual Department of Public Information training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries deserves particular attention. The 2002 programme, which was held from 8 September to 17 October, provided eight junior and mid-level media professionals — and additional journalists sponsored by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation of Germany — with in-depth knowledge of the work of the United Nations and its related organizations. To date, 330 journalists from 146 countries have participated in the programme.

73. The United Nations Cyberschoolbus web site, whose target audience is students from kindergarten to 12th grade and their teachers, has continued to develop new educational materials on a wide range of issues, most notably HIV/AIDS, literacy, water, human rights, child soldiers, healthy environments for

children and landmines. The model United Nations section of the site was redesigned to make it easier to navigate and the content was updated to provide better support to users. A new feature, "Ask an Ambassador", was added to make the United Nations more accessible to youth around the world. Significant progress in translating material on Cyberschoolbus from English to Chinese, Russian and Spanish was also made. The web site received the Blue Ribbon award from *National Geographic* as one of the best web sites for teaching and learning geography. It also received a donation from iEARN, a United States-based non-governmental organization, to use towards the development of web-based projects that promote the interaction of youth around the world.

74. During the past year, the Department devoted an increasing amount of attention to reaching audiences beyond those at Headquarters, often with the aid of new technologies. Videoconferencing is being used by a growing number of universities and other organizations to link United Nations officials with their groups. It has also become a feature of the various student observances organized by the Department, in which young people at Headquarters have been able to interact with others throughout the world, for example, with war-affected children in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and Kosovo as part of last year's observance of the International Day of Peace; with other students in Canada, the Czech Republic, Mexico, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and several locations throughout the United States studying issues related to human rights and the Millennium Development Goals as part of the Student Conference on Human Rights in December 2002; and, in June 2003, with students from Lebanon and Kenya, focusing on freshwater for World Environment Day. For each of those programmes, there was a webcast component, enabling the Department to reach an even larger audience.

75. In recent months, there has been a rise in the number of requests from universities and others away from Headquarters for United Nations officials to address gatherings such as model United Nations conferences and other events, in fact, a development that reflected the increased public and media focus on the United Nations. At the same time, the number of visitors to Headquarters continued to suffer, in part because of concerns about security, especially related to the conflict with Iraq, and in part because of travel restrictions related to the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). Nonetheless, the operation celebrated a milestone in November 2002, marking the fiftieth anniversary of guided tours with a photographic exhibit chronicling their history and a reunion that brought nearly 500 former and current guides together at Headquarters and mobilized them to continue their advocacy for the Organization as its "ambassadors to the public" in their local communities.

76. Other exhibits mounted by the Department over the past year have covered a variety of educational, cultural, and international themes, including the HIV/AIDS pandemic, literacy across the globe, treasures of Mexican folk art and dialogue of cultures: artists of the Francophonie. As with some of the other activities highlighted above, the reach of exhibits extends beyond Headquarters, with travelling exhibits sent not only to international conferences, but also to a variety of venues in different countries, among them the Czech Republic, Japan, Myanmar and Poland.

77. The Graphic Design Unit designs, from concept to final electronic files, all print promotional materials, which include but are not limited to logos, posters, book covers, sales and press kits, brochures, booklets and newsletters. The Unit is also responsible for formulating printing specifications for both internal and external printing, scheduling and tracking, costing estimates and final proof approvals.

B. Outreach to non-governmental organizations

78. The Department of Public Information continued to provide an intensive information programme for non-governmental organizations working with the United Nations, in particular those associated with the Department and those having consultative status with the United Nations through the Economic and Social Council. The programme, which highlights the work of many of the substantive offices in the Secretariat and other members of the United Nations family, reaches out to non-governmental organization partners through its weekly briefing programme, a two-day orientation programme for new non-governmental organization representatives, a communications workshop programme, the NGO Section web site and the NGO Resource Centre. The Department of Public Information/Non-Governmental Organization Conference in September continues to be the premier event for the non-governmental organization community at Headquarters each year.

79. The 55th Annual Department of Public Information/Non-Governmental Organization Conference, on the theme "Rebuilding societies emerging from conflict: a shared responsibility", organized in partnership with the associated non-governmental organization community, was held from 9 to 11 September 2002, drawing 2,000 participants from 90 countries around the world. Preparations are under way for the 56th Conference, on the theme "Human security and dignity: fulfilling the promise of the United Nations", which will be held from 8 to 10 September 2003 and will feature a number of parallel events organized in cooperation with United Nations information centres in virtually all regions of the world.

80. The Department continues to reach out to broad-based non-governmental organizations, especially those in developing countries, in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Non-Governmental Liaison Service and the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations and other partners. Reflecting its rigorous programme of evaluation and review, the Department associated a total of 30 new non-governmental organizations and disassociated 80 organizations that no longer met the criteria for association, bringing the total number of non-governmental organizations associated with the Department to 1,375 as at July 2003.

C. Publishing activities

81. The Department undertook a wide range of different promotional campaigns for United Nations publications. The new United Nations publications catalogue was distributed at the beginning of 2003 in both print and CD-ROM format. The broad promotional coverage of the catalogues was supplemented by more focused brochures and flyers, which targeted a wide range of different customer groups.

Combined, over 450,000 potential customers were reached during the period under review. Outreach was further extended through the growing use of e-mail, either in the form of the monthly new publications newsletter, *E-news*, or specific product announcements. In addition to marketing activities undertaken by the sales offices in New York and Geneva, the United Nations bookshops in both locations helped to promote United Nations publications to visitors and those attending conferences. In Geneva, the introduction of a commercial partner to operate the store led to an increase in the level of promotion within the Palais des Nations of both books and gift items. At the same time, the New York bookshop has continued to explore new sales avenues through book signings and special promotions.

82. As in previous years, there has been active cooperation with all the United Nations funds and programmes to support the promotion of their books. In addition, a new cooperative agreement was reached with the International Atomic Energy Agency to promote a select list of its titles through the sales programme.

VII. Conclusion: the next steps

83. **The Department of Public Information's practical and strategic reforms are geared to achieving the Secretary-General's objective of revitalizing the United Nations and restoring public confidence in the Organization. As the voice of the Organization, the Department seeks to reflect and has an impact on the work of the United Nations in every area.**

84. **Major reforms have been introduced under the authority of the Secretary-General and in consultation with the Committee on Information and Member States. The new mission statement, the updated operating model and revised organizational structure have generated a renewed sense of mission within the Department, which is increasingly reflected in its activities.**

85. **However, in keeping with the Secretary-General's philosophy, the Department of Public Information views its transformation as a process, not an event. It continues actively to promote the establishment of a culture of communications throughout the Organization.**

86. **As part of its reorientation process, the Department is working to establish a new ethos of performance management through the systematic evaluation of the impact of its programmed activities, aimed at ensuring that United Nations information products and services are targeted and effective and achieve the greatest public impact. A key element of the evaluation will be the new annual programme impact review, the first of which has now commenced. By establishing performance measures, the system allows programme managers to gauge how well their activities meet their pre-defined objectives, while using the information gathered for future programme planning. The review is designed to capture information that will, over time, allow more rational and transparent decisions to be taken on the effectiveness of the Department's information products and activities.**

87. **Another significant development in the Department's performance management efforts is its close collaboration with the Office of Internal Oversight Services on two projects. In response to General Assembly resolution 57/300, the Office is assisting the Department with a systematic three-year**

evaluation of its activities, which will form part of a pilot project by the Office to refine and institutionalize self-evaluation throughout the Organization within a result-based management framework. In addition, the Department is working with the Office to complete a series of change management projects.

88. **On a practical level, the Department has provided training to 140 staff on evaluation and on audience research. Further training is scheduled on performance measurement for communication activities. Given the limited resources, it will continue to explore creative means to promote evaluation as a fundamental component of production and planning.**

89. **The changes the Department is undergoing are both essential and difficult. Change does not happen overnight and, like any creative endeavour, it never comes without cost. However, the Department of Public Information remains convinced that by becoming stronger and more effective, it will bring the United Nations closer to the peoples of the world. It also shares with Member States the belief that enhanced cooperation is vital. The support, understanding and commitment of partners in the media and civil society, but most particularly among Member States, will be essential to that task.**

Notes

[1] A detailed listing of the major activities and outputs of the Department of Public Information in the past year is set out in an internal departmental compilation. It is available electronically and can be provided upon request.

[2] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/58/21).

[3] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and Corrigendum).

[4] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[5] A/CONF.189/12 and Corr.1.

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General and complete disarmament: promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation

Promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation

Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/58/150.

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I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 7 of its resolution 57/63, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on the issue of the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation and to submit a report containing that information to the Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

2. Pursuant to that request, on 28 February 2003, a note verbale was sent to Member States inviting them to provide information on the subject. The replies received are reproduced in section II below. Additional replies received will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Governments

Bolivia

[Original: Spanish]
[17 June 2003]

Bolivia, aware and supportive of the United Nations goal of maintaining international peace and security, is willing to take joint action to prevent and eliminate critical situations which pose a threat to peace.

The problems which lead to the break-up of State security are always complex and of universal concern and these characteristics will guide joint and solidary efforts to resolve them.

Agreements are an important tool, provided that their negotiation is not preceded by discrimination, in view of the complementarity that exists in bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral relations in the areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms trafficking.

Cooperation and international consultations with a view to resolving disputes by peaceful means, on the basis of dialogue and the strengthening of confidence-building measures, are essential tools for rapprochement and friendship between nations.

Bolivia reaffirms the indispensable value of multilateral diplomacy and recognizes it as a means of carrying forward the multiple negotiations on arms regulation and disarmament.

Threats must be prevented and eliminated, disputes must be resolved and the breakdown of world peace must be halted; the responsibility of lifting the dark shadow eclipsing international peace and security must be shared by the nations of the world through multilateralism.

Jordan

[Original: Arabic]
[1 July 2003]

1. Jordan supports the continuation of all international and regional efforts to promote multilateralism in disarmament and non-proliferation and urges the adoption of measures and procedures to remove prohibited weapons from circulation and dispose of them, and to concentrate on economic development and promote peace under the auspices of the United Nations. Jordan also affirms that a political will and a sincere commitment by all parties involved are necessary in order to achieve peace and stability in the world, as a guarantee of lasting and comprehensive peace.

2. The phenomenon of instability resulting from conflicts in the Middle East region calls for intensive cooperation and the adoption of transparent and comprehensive regional and international measures among all States of the region. In recent decades, Jordan has adopted clear policies that have defined its position with respect to disarmament, thereby underlining its support for all initiatives and efforts in that field in the various national, regional and international forums. Jordan considers that the question of disarmament cannot be addressed as an isolated issue or as one to be handled by individual States; the situation will become increasingly dangerous unless it is addressed through serious and effective regional and international efforts to achieve disarmament and strengthen the concept of multilateralism.

3. In the field of strengthening multilateralism in disarmament and non-proliferation, Jordan has ratified all the international conventions and treaties related to weapons of mass destruction, the most important of which are as follows:

(a) Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT);

(b) Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT);

(c) Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (PWC);

(d) Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC);

(e) Jordan supports all initiatives aimed at the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

4. In that context, Jordan is making diligent efforts to make the Middle East region a zone free of weapons of mass destruction through its effective participation in the technical committee endorsed by the Arab ministers for foreign affairs at their one hundred and first session to prepare a project to make the Middle East region a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. Jordan's ratification of the conventions and treaties on weapons of mass destruction and its active and positive role in the organizations established for that purpose are clear evidence of Jordan's concern for and commitment to international instruments to strengthen security, peace and stability throughout the world.

5. Jordan's position with respect to the attainment of that objective can be summarized as follows:

(a) Encouraging the elimination of the nuclear threat from the Middle East region and commitment to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and to making the region free of all weapons of mass destruction;

(b) Proposing practical measures to reduce tension, build confidence and control the arms race in the region in all its forms under the auspices of the United Nations;

(c) Accession by all States of the region to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and placing all nuclear installations in the region under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency;

(d) Strengthening intelligence cooperation and confidence-building measures between the States of the Middle East region and the arms-exporting States of the world;

(e) Refraining from any action involving violations of treaties or conventions, or of State sovereignty.

Mexico

[Original: Spanish]
[3 June 2003]

Disarmament is a priority of Mexican foreign policy in the multilateral arena. Historically, within the framework of the United Nations system and in regional bodies, Mexico has promoted multilateral action designed to achieve general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

Mexico is playing its part in the collective endeavour to address threats to international peace and security and, in that regard, accords particular importance to the role of disarmament and non-proliferation. Mexico's position and activities with regard to disarmament are in conformity with its foreign policy principle "advancement of international peace and security", laid down in article 89, subparagraph X of its Political Constitution.

In its efforts to promote multilateralism in the area of disarmament, Mexico assigns a central role to the United Nations. Mexico therefore supports the holding of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Mexico considers that multilateralism is the basic principle underlying the resolution of issues of concern to the international community and the most effective means of doing so. It is also the condition sine qua non for achieving progress in the negotiations in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation. However, Mexico recognizes the complementary relationship between bilateral and plurilateral negotiations on the one hand, and multilateral negotiations on the other.

Verification of international agreements plays a pivotal role in the promotion of multilateralism in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. The multilateral instruments relating to disarmament and arms control must be accompanied by non-discriminatory verification mechanisms designed in such a way that, while encouraging ongoing consultations and cooperation between parties to resolve disputes and facilitating compliance with obligations, they discourage recourse to unilateral measures.

Mexico supports the implementation of the recommendations contained in the United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education[1], submitted by the Secretary-General on 9 October 2002, which is, in itself, a significant agreement and the product of multilateral efforts.

Senegal

[Original: French]
[9 June 2003]

Senegal supports multilateral cooperation with a view to the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security and endorses the principles governing disarmament and arms control. Senegal considers that transparency in armaments positively reinforces non-proliferation at the international level, since the transmission of military information increases confidence, predictability, moderation and thus stability.

Transparency may serve as a basis for arms limitation and verifiable reduction at the subregional, regional and global levels. In that respect, Senegal affirms its commitment to disarmament.

Measures to ensure the security of electronic communications are required in the area of information exchanges, particularly with respect to the flow of arms. Such information must be confidential.

Consequently, it must be protected by means of a number of measures, namely:

- Ensuring the security of hardware, software and computer processing through the implementation of appropriate technical measures;
- Ensuring the security of information exchange processes through special, detailed regulations.

The specifically environmental aspect involves the degradation of and assaults on nature caused by the use of nuclear, bacteriological, chemical and radiological weapons and anti-personnel mines.

Senegal confirms its ongoing concern over protecting and conserving the environment in order to promote sustainable peace and development.

In that connection, Senegal supports the planned creation of a United Nations mine-action fund, which would be financed by a tax on the manufacture and production of weapons and weapons systems.

Moreover, the observance of standards relating to the implementation of disarmament agreements is linked with the observance of rules to which a number of States have voluntarily subscribed. Global disarmament cannot be achieved without regional disarmament. Accordingly, the two processes must be conducted together in the interest of regional and international peace and security. Senegal has therefore ratified all the conventions on disarmament, notably the moratorium on small arms and light weapons, a review of which, from the standpoint of the implementation of agreements on disarmament, reveals a number of shortcomings.

[1] A/57/124.

The moratorium provides for the establishment of national commissions and for ensuring their effective operation and the provision of adequate human, material and financial resources. Awareness-raising, through public forums, has been carried out in collaboration with two organizations:

– Mouvement contre les armes légères en Afrique de l'ouest (MALAO);

– Cercles de réflexion du Sénégal (CERES).

Training has been carried out by means of workshops led by senior officers from the National Army and Gendarmerie, officials from the National Security Service and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, members of civil society, academics and members of the gunsmiths' association.

The national commission also provided technical assistance to MALAO by organizing, in Dakar, under the auspices of the non-governmental organization "Alert International", a meeting for civil society on the theme of small arms and light weapons.

Transparency as regards the legal arms trade requires the creation of at least two registers: one for State-owned weapons and another for weapons belonging to individuals who have obtained prior State authorization. In addition to achieving those objectives, the commission is responsible for obtaining exemptions for the import of State-owned weapons and for dealing with applications from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for the import of weapons destined for other countries.

The exchange of information, as provided for by the moratorium, may give a clear indication about the weapons owned by the ECOWAS countries. However, the real value of the exchange of information between the signatories to the moratorium is the desire for transparency and honesty which should guide all those involved. This is obviously not the case for all Senegal's neighbours, which obtain the bulk of their weapons from former Eastern bloc countries. It is common knowledge that all their transactions go undeclared; therefore the regulations are not implemented in a uniform fashion in all geographical areas.

The moratorium is particularly restrictive for Senegal, since its weapons come from a single source, namely, countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union. Senegal's suppliers always observe international regulations concerning weapons and ammunition.

It is necessary to overcome the delay in implementing the provisions of the moratorium and to supplement the associated measures, bearing in mind the following proposals:

1. At the national level, the commission should assess annual weapons and ammunition requirements on the basis of a joint request from the security forces and, at the same time, formulate an exemption which would be valid for one year and renewable. That procedure is easily justified in view of the situation of the army in Casamance.

Furthermore, an observer office, provided for by the moratorium, could be established in the subregion. That office would reduce the marked imbalance in the supply of weapons and ammunition and inspection certificates would be issued by ECOWAS agents.

2. At the subregional level (ECOWAS): the importance of monitoring all weapons and ammunition around Senegal is reason enough for ECOWAS to draw up a moratorium on small arms and light weapons with the countries which are not members of ECOWAS but are Senegal's neighbours. That action would assuage certain obvious concerns regarding rebel movements in the subregion.

Respect for the environment means that Senegal must demine some areas of the national territory. In that regard, consideration could be given to creating a United Nations fund which would be financed from a tax on the manufacture and production of weapons and weapons systems.

In the context of building States' capacity to identify means of ensuring, in a viable manner, the traceability of weapons, a support and assistance programme for electronic communications could be contemplated. In preparation for that option, preliminary personnel training would be undertaken before the actual provision of information technology equipment.

The objectives would therefore be to eliminate delays in the implementation of all the provisions of the moratorium, to bring about internal and external improvements which would take into account Senegal's specific situation in relation to the rebellion in Casamance and, finally, to establish a United Nations mine-action fund and provide it with adequate resources generated from the tax on weapons and weapons systems.

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Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly

Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

During the period under review, the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa convened its eighteenth and nineteenth ministerial meetings and organized a subregional seminar on the implementation in Central Africa of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Through its Bureau, it continued to monitor political and security developments in the region.

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* A/58/150.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 57/88 of 22 November 2002 entitled "Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa", the General Assembly, inter alia, reaffirmed its support for efforts aimed at promoting confidence-building measures at regional and subregional levels in order to ease tensions and conflicts and to further peace, stability and sustainable development in Central Africa. It also reaffirmed its support for the programme of work of the Committee adopted at its organizational meeting, held in Yaoundé from 27 to 31 July 1992 (see A/47/511).*

2. By the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1197 (1998), to provide the States members of the Committee with the necessary support for the implementation and smooth functioning of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), created in 1999 by the heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the early warning mechanism in Central Africa. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the States members of the Committee with assistance to ensure that they are able to carry out their efforts, and requested him to submit to it at its fifty-eighth session a report on the implementation of the resolution.

3. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request. It covers the activities undertaken by the United Nations and the Committee since the submission of the previous report (A/57/161).

II. Action by the United Nations

4. During the reporting period, the Department for Disarmament Affairs, which serves as the secretariat of the Committee, assisted the Committee with the organization of two ministerial meetings and a seminar on the implementation, in Central Africa, of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted in July 2001 at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It also continued to provide advisory, substantive and technical support to the Committee and to collaborate with the secretariat of ECCAS on matters of mutual concern to the Committee, in particular, on questions related to peace and security. Through its Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, the Department for Disarmament Affairs assisted the Committee in developing a two-year programme of activities to be carried out from May 2003 to May 2005 by the States members of the Committee in the implementation of the Programme of Action in their respective countries and at the subregional level.

III. Meetings of the Standing Advisory Committee

5. At its eighteenth ministerial meeting, held in Bangui from 26 to 30 August 2002, while reviewing the geopolitical and security situation in its respective member States, the Committee welcomed the positive developments in Angola, in particular, the signing on 4 April 2002 of the Memorandum of Understanding Addendum to the Lusaka Protocol for the Cessation of Hostilities and the Resolution

of the Outstanding Military Issues between the Government and the União Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola (UNITA). The Committee commended the Government on its laudable efforts to create conditions that were conducive to the resumption of the peace process, national reconciliation and reconstruction. However, it expressed concern about the humanitarian situation in the country, in particular, the existence of large numbers of displaced persons facing malnutrition and poor health coverage and appealed to the international community to increase substantially its assistance to the Government.

6. With regard to the situation in Burundi, the Committee expressed deep concern about the deterioration of the living conditions of the people of Burundi and the pervasive insecurity caused by the continued attacks against the civilian population and the economic infrastructure. It hailed the efforts of the mediation team to obtain a ceasefire and restore peace in Burundi and encouraged the latter to continue those efforts in the context of the Arusha peace process. The Committee welcomed the progressive establishment of transitional institutions and expressed its support for the efforts of the Government of Burundi and all Burundians engaged in the search for a lasting peace. It invited the countries of the Central African subregion, particularly those of the Great Lakes subregion, to put pressure on the armed groups to conclude ceasefire agreements and help the Burundians restore peace through dialogue and reconciliation and to refrain from providing any direct or indirect assistance to the rebels. The Committee launched an urgent appeal to the international community and, in particular, to bilateral and multilateral donors to provide substantial support to the peace efforts and the improvement of the living conditions of the people of Burundi.

7. As to the situation in Cameroon, the Committee welcomed the climate of peace and stability prevailing in that country. It took note of the information provided by the delegation of Cameroon regarding the Bakassi situation between Cameroon and Nigeria and invited the two parties to refrain from any action that could heighten tension, pending the decision of the International Court of Justice, and also invited the two countries to respect the verdict of the Court.

8. With regard to the situation in the Central African Republic, the Committee welcomed the positive developments in the political and security situation in that country, characterized by ongoing political dialogue between the Government and the opposition and the gradual return of civilian and military refugees. However, it expressed concern about the precariousness of the general security situation, in particular, the proliferation of light weapons, which had resulted in an increase in the activities of gangsters and bands as well as the continuing tensions on the border with Chad. The Committee also expressed concern about the economic and financial difficulties facing that country. In that connection, it reiterated its urgent appeal to the international community and the Bretton Woods institutions to provide the Central African Republic with the essential financial support to allow it to resolve its serious financial problems, a sine qua non for peace, security and development.

9. Concerning the situation in the Republic of the Congo, the Committee welcomed the improvement in the general situation of peace and security, the gradual return of refugees and displaced persons, the continuing collection of weapons, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants and the holding of general elections without incident. It was nevertheless troubled by recent terrorist attacks carried out in the Pool region and on the outskirts of Brazzaville. It also

expressed concern over the financial difficulties encountered by the programmes for the collection of weapons and the reintegration of former combatants. In that connection, the Committee urgently appealed to the international community to provide assistance to the Republic of the Congo to enable it to respond to all those challenges and to ensure the restoration of a lasting peace and conditions conducive to the country's harmonious development.

10. With regard to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Committee once again took note of the fundamental concerns of the Government and the people of that country regarding: serious human rights violations there, in particular, recent massacres in Kissangani and Bunia; the need for the prompt demilitarization of Kissangani; continued infringements of the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of their country; combat involving rebel forces and other armed groups in the east and north-east of the country, clashes between ethnic groups, the deteriorating humanitarian situation and troop movements in the east of the country, violation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, the Kampala Plan and the Harare Sub-plan; and the continued systematic plundering and unlawful exploitation of natural resources and other riches in the occupied part of the country. The Committee appealed to all parties to respect fully the relevant Security Council resolutions on the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It further appealed to the international community for assistance in the implementation of the peace process, especially in the areas of disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of armed groups and the total and orderly withdrawal of all foreign troops.

11. Regarding the situations in Chad, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe, the Committee welcomed the prevailing climate of peace and stability in those countries. It also welcomed the signing, in July 2002, of the peace agreement between the heads of State of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which offered hope that the conflict between the two countries would soon be resolved. The Committee hailed the arrest of perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide by some States in the subregion and urgently appealed to other States of the subregion to do likewise so that those guilty of acts of genocide in Rwanda could be brought to justice.

12. As indicated above, during the reporting period, the Committee also organized a subregional seminar on the implementation, in Central Africa, of the Programme of Action adopted in July 2001 at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The objectives of the seminar were to: (i) review initiatives undertaken by States members of the Committee in implementing the Programme of Action at the national and regional levels; (ii) identify major obstacles and challenges; (iii) identify priority areas for intervention at both the national and regional levels and areas requiring international assistance; (iv) develop a programme of priority activities for the implementation of the Programme of Action within Central Africa over the next two years; and (v) look into the possibility of establishing, within the secretariat of the Economic Community of Central African States, a regional mechanism to harmonize and coordinate efforts by individual member States and oversee the implementation of the Programme of Action.

13. At the conclusion of the seminar, the Committee adopted a two-year programme of activities to be implemented at the national and subregional levels.

The programme of activities identified the following priority areas: (i) the establishment of national commissions/structures to coordinate national policies to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons; (ii) the collection and destruction of arms; (iii) the updating, strengthening and harmonizing of national laws, administrative rules and procedures on the carrying, use, manufacturing and sale of arms and munitions; (iv) the strengthening of the capacities of security institutions in the control of small arms; (v) the promotion of transparency in the control of small arms through the creation of national arms registers and databanks; (vi) the promotion of the involvement of civil society in fighting against the proliferation and circulation of illicit small arms and light weapons; and (vii) the strengthening of transborder cooperation in the control of illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. The report on the seminar is annexed to the report on the nineteenth ministerial meeting of the Committee (see A/57/823-S/2003/610).

14. With regard to the nineteenth ministerial meeting, the Committee noted the progress that had been made in most member States, in particular, Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It welcomed the recent peaceful change of the presidency in Burundi from former President Pierre Buyoya to President Domitien Ndandaye; the signing on 7 October 2002 and 3 December 2002, of ceasefire agreements between the Government of Burundi and three rebel groups, as well as the return to Bujumbura of some of the leaders of the rebel groups. Nonetheless, the Committee once again expressed grave concern over the deterioration of the living conditions of the population and, in particular, the continued attacks by armed groups on civilians and the economic infrastructure. It called upon the Central African countries, in particular, those of the Great Lakes region, to put pressure on the rebel groups to conclude ceasefire agreements with the Government and to assist the people of Burundi to find peace through dialogue and reconciliation as well as to stop providing direct or indirect assistance to the rebel groups.

15. With regard to the situation in the Central African Republic, the Committee welcomed the positive actions undertaken by the new authorities, following the 15 March military coup, in particular, the appointment of a Prime Minister acceptable to all, the creation of a transitional Government consisting of different political and social groups in the country, the payment of salary arrears that had contributed to the fall of the previous regime and the gradual restoration of security in Bangui. It also welcomed the improvement in relations between the Central African Republic and Chad. However, the Committee noted that the country was still facing grave economic and financial difficulties. In that connection, it adopted a Declaration by which, among other things, it called upon the international community, in particular, the Bretton Woods institutions and the development partners of the Central African Republic, to increase their assistance so that the country might overcome many years of destruction and devastation by persistent armed conflicts.

16. The Committee noted the progress registered in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since the signing in July and September 2002 of peace agreements between the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, and between the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, as well as the promulgation of the transitional constitution on 4 April 2003 and the swearing in, on 7 April 2003, of President Joseph Kabila as Transitional President. The Committee, however, expressed grave concern over the recent resumption of hostilities in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the

Congo, especially in Ituri, the north and the southern Kivu; the massacres and other massive violations of human rights in Ituri; the degradation of the humanitarian situation in the eastern part of the country and the inadequacy of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in relation to the situation on the ground.

17. The Committee appealed to all parties concerned to respect all Security Council resolutions pertaining to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and called upon the international community to continue lending its support to the peace process in that country, to provide humanitarian assistance to the affected population and to respond generously to the global appeal for the Democratic Republic of the Congo launched by the United Nations in 2002. Moreover, the Committee called upon the Security Council to change the mandate of MONUC so that it could be more responsive to the situation on the ground.

18. The Committee welcomed plans to send a Security Council mission and the United Nations Inter-Agency Assessment Mission to the region in early June. It expressed the hope that the Inter-Agency Mission would result in the creation, in Central Africa, of a United Nations subregional office that would coordinate peacekeeping missions and efforts of the various Representatives of the Secretary-General in the region. It also expressed the hope that the Security Council would seriously consider including all States members of ECCAS in the forthcoming International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region. To that end, it tasked the ECCAS secretariat with working very closely with ECCAS Ambassadors at the United Nations to ensure that concerns of the region were taken into account while preparing the terms of reference of the two missions.

IV. Programme of activities for 2003-2004

19. The Committee's programme of activities for the period 2003-2004 will be elaborated at the twentieth ministerial meeting, to be held in Malabo from 27 to 30 October 2003.

V. Administrative and financial matters

20. During the period under review, the General Assembly continued to provide funding, from the regular budget, for the two ministerial meetings, while the subregional seminar on the implementation in Central Africa of the Programme of Action adopted in July 2001 at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects was financed from the Trust Fund of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. The Government of the Czech Republic and the secretariat of ECCAS each contributed US$ 15,000 and $10,000, respectively, towards the convening of the seminar. In addition, the South African-based Institute for Security Studies covered the costs of participation of representatives of civil society from the region in the amount of $9,000. The Secretary-General greatly appreciates those contributions. Owing to serious financial constraints during the reporting period, the Committee has had to cancel a workshop on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the standardized instrument for reporting military

expenditures. The workshop was scheduled to be held in Yaoundé in June 2003 at the estimated cost of $109,270. Efforts are currently being made to seek contributions from interested member States so as to enable the Committee to convene the workshop in the near future. The Secretary-General reiterates his appeal to Member States and intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organizations to contribute generously to the Trust Fund in order to enable the Committee to implement fully its annual programme of work.

VI. Conclusions and observations

21. **The Committee continues to play a vital role in promoting peace and security in Central Africa. It continues to serve as a forum for regular consultation and exchange of information and suggestions among the States members of ECCAS in the areas of peace, security and development in Central Africa. Its member States attach great value and importance to the continued existence of the Committee.**

22. **Since the establishment of the Committee in 1992, the General Assembly's continued support for the implementation of its activities has led to strengthened and closer cooperation in the areas of peace and security among Central African countries. However, much remains to be done if conditions for lasting peace, disarmament and development are to be achieved. It is incumbent upon the States members of the Committee to strive to become the driving force behind all peace initiatives and efforts in their region. It remains imperative for the international community to continue to lend its political, financial, technical and material support to promoting, peace, security, stability and development in Central Africa. For his part, the Secretary-General will continue to provide all the assistance he can.**

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Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the twenty-fifth special session of the General Assembly

Special session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/275 of 20 December 2002, entitled "Special session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)".

The report summarizes the progress made in the implementation of the resolution by Governments, and in particular with regard to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. It also covers progress being made towards the goal of achieving a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers by 2020, as contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, as well as commitments made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, including the commitment to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water or who do not have access to basic sanitation.

* A/58/150.
** Submission of the report was delayed owing to consultations.

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The report also addresses those aspects of the resolution asking Governments to support UN-Habitat in its work to implement the Habitat Agenda in developing countries, including actions such as revitalizing the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation; making international partnerships more effective; helping to empower Habitat Agenda partners in their work; working more closely with United Nations sister agencies; organizing international agencies to monitor the implementation of the Habitat Agenda; and supporting the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Managing Water for African Cities Programme.

A number of recommendations are made in the report with a view to encouraging Governments to further strengthen actions towards implementing the Habitat Agenda and the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, and towards the achievement of other internationally agreed development goals.

I. Introduction

1. In 2002, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) completed a successful transition to become a fully fledged Programme that has re-focused upon the strategic "repackaging" of the Habitat Agenda in the form of specific objectives needed to achieve relevant goals of the Millennium Declaration. UN-Habitat has gone through a guided transformation and is now positioned squarely in the mainstream of the United Nations development agenda with a more streamlined and effective structure and staff. In May 2003, the former Commission on Human Settlements met for its inaugural meeting as the Governing Council of UN-Habitat to take up a number of issues referred to in resolution 57/275 of 20 December 2002.

2. In that resolution, the General Assembly encouraged Member States to strengthen and institutionalize national mechanisms as broad-based platforms for the preparation and implementation of their plans of action based on the Habitat Agenda and the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium. It underlined the commitments made by Governments to the goal of achieving a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers by 2020, as contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, as well as commitments made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, including the commitment to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water or who do not have access to basic sanitation. Governments were also urged to strengthen and mainstream shelter and human settlements activities, including policy making at all levels, in their development planning framework.

3. In that resolution the Assembly also requested UN-Habitat to support developing countries in implementing these commitments by, among other actions: revitalizing the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation; making international partnerships more effective in implementing the goals of the Habitat Agenda; helping to empower Habitat Agenda partners in their work; working more closely with United Nations sister agencies; organizing international agencies to monitor the implementation of the Habitat Agenda; and supporting the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Managing Water for African Cities Programme.

4. The present report summarizes progress made by Governments and UN-Habitat since the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly in the key areas of the resolution and makes a number of recommendations for consideration by the Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

II. Financing human settlements

5. In its resolution 57/275, the General Assembly reiterated the call to Member States to strengthen UN-Habitat, and especially the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation in order to achieve its primary operative objective, as set out in resolution 3327 (XXIX) of 16 December 1974 of supporting the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, including in respect of shelter, related infrastructure development programmes and housing finance institutions and mechanisms, particularly in developing countries. In following up on the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development and in response to General Assembly resolution 56/206 of 21 December 2001, which devotes a full section to

financing human settlements. Governments have been working with UN-Habitat to explore ways and means to assist in the mobilization of domestic financial resources for sustainable urbanization, especially in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. In the past six months, UN-Habitat has completed an extensive review of the Foundation and proposed a global shelter facility, or similar mechanism, which may become one of the most important tools in our common fight against urban poverty. At the recent session of the Governing Council, member States approved a new UN-Habitat subprogramme in this area, which will support operational activities and their linkages with the normative work of UN-Habitat at the country and city levels.

6. At the nineteenth session of the Governing Council, member States also contributed to the strengthening of the Foundation, as exemplified by the doubling of total financial contributions in the current biennium, the resumption of funding from some member States that had suspended support pending revitalization and management reforms, the conclusion by some member States of multi-year commitments to finance core programmes of the Foundation and the forging of new partnerships with multilateral financial institutions and regional development banks in support of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the international development goals of the Millennium Declaration and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

7. During the first half of 2003, a number of Governments reiterated the need for increased and predictable financial support for UN-Habitat. The most notable increased contributions have been from the Governments of the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. As a result, the general-purpose contributions forecast for UN-Habitat for 2003 is currently $7.7 million, compared with $6 million in 2002, reflecting a 28 per cent increase.

8. UN-Habitat has been developing its collaboration with international financial institutions to encourage their support for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and of the Millennium Development Goal of achieving a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers by the year 2020. The Cities Alliance partnership between the World Bank and UN-Habitat, which has been joined by a number of bilateral donors and also recently by the Asian Development Bank, continues to provide an important forum for policy coordination and development, as well as providing support for the preparation of pro-poor city development strategies and slum upgrading programmes.

9. In addition, UN-Habitat has been collaborating with other parts of the World Bank Group. For example, building on the experience of the Managing Water for African Cities Programme, a wider framework of collaboration is being developed with the World Bank for expanded support for African cities, addressing the Millennium Development Goal in the area of water and sanitation. Also, with the support of the President of the World Bank, UN-Habitat has begun discussions with the International Finance Corporation to explore ways of leveraging private sector capital into slum upgrading and low-cost shelter and infrastructure programmes serving the urban poor.

10. Given the evident interrelationships among the provision of safe water, sanitation and adequate housing, Governments included shelter among the water and sanitation, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity (WEHAB) targets in paragraph 18 of the Johannesburg Declaration of the World Summit on Sustainable

Development. As part of the follow-up to the Summit and the WEHAB commitments, UN-Habitat has established a Water and Sanitation Trust Fund within the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation, to which substantial contributions have already been made by a number of member States. The Trust Fund is intended to facilitate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal and related target for 2015, as redefined at the Summit, of reducing by one half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe water and basic sanitation. The Trust Fund activities will be directed to create an enabling environment for pro-poor investment in water and sanitation in cities in developing countries and thus provide a vehicle to improve significantly the volume and effectiveness of official development assistance flows in the sector. The Fund will support cities and communities with demonstrated commitments to taking initiatives promoting investment in water and sanitation specifically targeted to the poorest of the poor. It will address, with priority, requests for support from Africa. Special consideration will also be given to initiatives that could reduce the burden on women and children resulting from lack of access to safe water and adequate sanitation.

11. With regard to the regional development banks, UN-Habitat has recently concluded a memorandum of understanding with the Asian Development Bank that will provide $500 million in fast-track credit lines directly to Asian countries for pro-poor investments in water and sanitation. UN-Habitat has also recently concluded a memorandum of understanding with the Inter-American Development Bank that is expected to form the basis for enhanced future cooperation between the two organizations.

12. In an innovative partnership strategy, the government of the Netherlands is pioneering the UN-Habitat Partnership Agreement, which provides a comprehensive goal-oriented framework for participation in development and encourages multi-year donor funding of work on selected themes, strategies and outputs of the UN-Habitat biennial work programme.

III. Strengthening partnerships

13. Resolution 57/275 places particular emphasis on strengthening all Habitat Agenda partnerships. Its paragraph 8 encourages UN-Habitat to continue to implement the Habitat Agenda and the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium by promoting partnerships with local authorities, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other Habitat Agenda partners in order to empower them to play a more effective role in shelter provision and in the development of sustainable human settlements.

14. Member States of the UN-Habitat Governing Council revised the rules of procedure and recommended their adoption to the General Assembly so as to enable the active participation of UN-Habitat partners.

15. Habitat Agenda partners are involved in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda nationally and locally, at both the normative and the operational level. Partners take active part in UN-Habitat's campaigns, programmes and projects, as well as in work related to post-conflict reconstruction as in Afghanistan. The participation of partners in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda has become increasingly visible since the upgrading of UN-Habitat from a Centre to a Programme. Some of the significant activities in this context are set out below.

A. Local authorities

16. The call by Governments to intensify dialogues where possible on all issues related to effective decentralization and the strengthening of local authorities, in support of the Habitat Agenda, in conformity with the legal framework and policies of each country, was facilitated through a number of UN-Habitat projects, global programmes and global campaigns.

17. Prominent among the new joint activities is the successful work on city-to-city cooperation, undertaken in response to resolution 18/10 of the then-Commission on Human Settlements, with close collaboration among UN-Habitat, the Advisory Committee of Local Authorities and the World Associations of Cities and Local Authorities Coordination. Launched by the Executive Director of UN-Habitat in January 2000, the Advisory Committee has continued to serve as a vehicle for the engagement of local authorities in the work of the United Nations, including the World Summit on Sustainable Development. In August 2002, in their political declaration to the Summit, the World Associations confirmed UN-Habitat as their link to the United Nations.

18. At the nineteenth session of the Governing Council, member States endorsed the continuation of the dialogue on decentralization and the establishment of an advisory panel of experts on decentralization to guide and assist this process. The panel is to be multidisciplinary and regionally balanced.

19. A number of local authorities are directly supporting UN-Habitat activities, both technically and financially. The most prominent are Dubai municipality, co-organizer and sponsor of the International Award for Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment; Fukuoka municipality, supporting the UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific; Rio Municipality, supporting the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean; and Barcelona municipality, co-organizer of the second session of the World Urban Forum, to be held in September 2004.

B. Non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations

20. The NGO Forum held in conjunction with the nineteenth session of the Governing Council UN-Habitat attracted more than 500 participants. Substantial participation by slum-dwelling women and youth who cannot speak the official languages of the United Nations is an indication that language need not be a barrier to civic engagement. This participation of non-governmental and community-based organizations in the Governing Council is part of a strategic collaborative arrangement between such organizations and UN-Habitat. It is based on the commitments made in the Habitat Agenda and subsequent resolutions of the Governing Council, as well as of the special session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, that reinforced the facilitation of active involvement of all stakeholders on human settlements issues.

21. During the nineteenth session of the Governing Council, a number of structured, parallel events were held for youth, mainly from non-governmental organizations. A draft strategy on youth in the development of human settlements

and a draft resolution on enhancing the engagement of youth in the work of UN-Habitat were discussed by the youth representatives.

22. The challenge is how to strategically link the non-governmental organization partners that are involved mainly in advocacy work with those that are operational (especially partners with UN-Habitat in-house programmes). Although such links are already visible among the various types of partners that participated in the Governing Council forums, there is much room for improvement.

C. Private sector

23. During the nineteenth session of the Governing Council, a meeting of International Architects, Designers and Planners for Social Responsibility was organized, at which it was restated that the professions dealing with the built environment (architects, engineers, designers and planners) have a key and powerful role to play, as their input in the urban and other contexts influences social relationships, which in turn influence the quality of human existence. Professionals in the development of human settlements have been long-standing partners of UN-Habitat, and many are now taking leading roles, at all levels, as advocates of the Habitat Agenda and other, related United Nations mandates.

24. Early in 2003, in a path-breaking partnership with the private sector, UN-Habitat entered into an agreement with the Environmental Sciences Research Institute, whereby the Institute will provide up to 1,000 cities in developing countries with complete Geographic Information Systems software packages and the necessary training at no cost to the cities or to the United Nations. This programme is in support of the UN-Habitat Global Urban Observatory, which is dedicated to assisting member States and local authorities to monitor their own progress in implementing the Habitat Agenda. This will result in the expansion of UN-Habitat collaboration with Habitat Agenda partners at all levels.

D. Parliamentarians

25. Parliamentarians have a particularly crucial role to play in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. Through national legislative processes, they may facilitate actions called for in each of the operative paragraphs of resolution 57/275 that refer to Member States. The Fourth Global Forum of Parliamentarians on Habitat, held in Berlin from 12 to 14 May 2003, adopted the Berlin Declaration, calling on Governments, inter alia, to increase financial support for the realization of the United Nations Millennium Development Goal of improving the lives of 100 million slum-dwellers by the year 2020, and calling on Governments to ensure the availability of predictable financial resources for UN-Habitat to strengthen its work on poverty alleviation.

E. World Urban Forum

26. In May 2003, the UN-Habitat Governing Council reiterated its position that attendance at sessions of the World Urban Forum should be as inclusive as possible, in order to ensure that not only national Governments but also local authorities and

other Habitat Agenda partners participate fully in the identification of new issues and the sharing of lessons learned, best practices and good policies, with a view to facilitating the optimum exchange of experience and the advancement of collective knowledge among Governments, cities and their development partners in the field of shelter and sustainable urbanization.

27. The Governing Council also noted with appreciation the invitation from the Prime Minister of Canada for the World Urban Forum to hold its third session in Vancouver in 2006. The second session will be held in Barcelona in September 2004.

IV. Coordination among international bodies, agencies and organizations

28. Paragraphs 7, 12, 13, 14 and 15 of resolution 57/275 refer to cooperation and coordination between UN-Habitat and other international entities, including the Cities Alliance, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the New Partnership for Africa's Development, as well as to the Habitat Agenda Task Manager System. Some of the key developments in this connection are set out below.

A. Cities Alliance

29. UN-Habitat continues its work to strengthen the Cities Alliance with staffing inputs and collaborative programme and project development. UN-Habitat, as a founding member of the Cities Alliance, has influenced its work on the preparation of city development strategy guidelines and strategies. The city development strategies are seen by UN-Habitat as an approach to urban poverty reduction that could contribute to the overall framework of national poverty reduction strategy paper efforts. As a result of UN-Habitat's efforts, the Cities Alliance has now defined the city development strategy as an action-plan for equitable growth in cities, developed and sustained through participation, to improve the quality of life for all citizens.

30. The participatory approach to city consultation for the preparation of a city development strategy is also now recognized. The guidelines state that the goals of a city development strategy include a collective city vision and action plan aimed at improving urban governance and management, increasing investment to expand employment and services, and systematic and sustained reductions in urban poverty. Slum upgrading programmes and city development strategies are seen as complementary activities in concert with the UN-Habitat campaigns on secure tenure and good governance. The follow-up activities to these campaign launches have been supported by the Cities Alliance with a view to preparing participatory pro-poor strategies. Through the Urban Management Programme, seven city development strategy exercises have been completed, and a synthesis and lessons study has been prepared.

B. United Nations Development Programme

31. UN-Habitat has recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and has already begun to establish Habitat programme managers as focal points in selected UNDP country offices. This will assist the Resident Coordinator system in providing both national and international expertise in shelter, sustainable human settlements and urban poverty components of the Common Country Assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

32. This should also facilitate the provision of support by all members of the United Nations system to regional, national and local urban observatories, networks and capacity-building institutions at the country level.

C. United Nations Environment Programme

33. Cooperation between UN-Habitat and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is a standing item on the agenda of the Governing Council. This cooperation continues in four previously established subject areas and within the system-wide efforts of the United Nations. Cooperation has continued on city environmental profiles, demonstrations of broad-based urban environmental planning and management, normative work on guidelines and tools and joint efforts for environmentally sound human settlements technology under the joint Sustainable Cities Programme. The two Programmes have also cooperated in the development of UNEP's new urban environment policy, on disaster management, on the Joint UNEP/United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) Task Force on the Balkans, the Managing Water for African Cities Programme and the phasing out of leaded gasoline in Africa. There is now system-wide coordination on issues of sustainable development within the contexts of the Environmental Management Group, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the World Urban Forum and the follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

D. Managing Water for African Cities and the New Partnership for Africa's Development

34. In the light of the activities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development in the water and infrastructure clusters, at the request of Governments, UN-Habitat is currently formulating a second phase of the Managing Water for African Cities Programme, which will be the first activity to be funded from the Water and Sanitation Trust Fund. Activities in the second phase will continue to promote increased investment in the seven cities already involved, but will also include the additional objectives of promoting improved sanitation and promoting pro-poor governance structures. It is anticipated that an additional five cities will join the Programme and that the capacity built in the region during its first phase will be used to define and develop the city-level action plans for the additional cities. Partnerships with multilateral and bilateral donors will be developed along lines similar to those of the sister programme in Asia, where UN-Habitat has entered into a formal memorandum of understanding with the Asian Development Bank in order to fast-track investment in the water and sanitation sector. Field missions for

programme formulation for both the newly and the previously involved cities will be undertaken in late 2003. The UN-Habitat joint initiative with the World Bank on pro-poor urban water governance will develop a framework to engage the poorest of the poor in decision-making on the provision of water and sanitation and will be one of the key components of the second phase of the Managing Water for African Cities Programme. The selection of new cities will be based on consideration of maintaining a good regional balance and the availability of counterpart support from participating cities.

E. Habitat Agenda Task Manager System

35. The Economic and Social Council, in paragraph 3 of its resolution 2002/38 of 26 July 2002, entitled "Coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda", invited the Executive Director of UN-Habitat to "pursue the establishment ... of the Habitat Agenda Task Manager System as a collaborative effort to allow better monitoring and mutual reinforcement of actions taken by international agencies in support of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda". The Commission on Sustainable Development, at its session in April 2003, decided to focus on water, sanitation and human settlements at its 2004 and 2005 sessions as part of the review of the follow-up and implementation of the commitments and Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. UN-Habitat has been given the responsibility of task manager for the drafting of the scoping paper on human settlements to be presented to the Commission and will contribute to the papers on water and sanitation, given the clear interconnections between these three sustainable development issues in an urbanized world.

36. UN-Habitat has started to implement elements of the Task Manager System in the following ways: (a) a partnership between UN-Habitat and the United Nations Statistics Division for monitoring the implementation of measures to achieve target 11 of the Millennium Development Goals, on slum upgrading (see A/56/326, annex); (b) creating 11 partnerships in the Coalition for Sustainable Urbanization aimed at implementing the Johannesburg Declaration and Plan of Implementation; (c) entering into a Partnership for Local Capacity Development, designed to promote cohesion and collective efficiency in making international support available for the development of local capacities for sustainable urbanization; and (d) implementing and monitoring partnerships developed in the context of UN-Habitat's global programmes and the two global campaigns on good urban governance and secure tenure.

V. Policy development

37. Member States are in the process of increasing efforts to institutionalize the process of planning actions, monitoring and reporting progress in the area of human settlements development (see resolution 57/275, paras. 3 and 11). As part of its global advocacy role, and in conjunction with its support for Governments and Habitat Agenda partners in their review of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, UN-Habitat is devoting more attention and resources to its knowledge management and reporting responsibilities. The aim is to position UN-Habitat as a hub of knowledge for policy development by strengthening its monitoring and

analysis capabilities and by networking with a large variety of partner institutions. Governments, UN-Habitat and other Habitat Agenda partners continue to support the formation of national and local urban observatories in order to monitor local conditions and trends, to track progress in implementing the Habitat Agenda and to provide objective policy advice to stakeholders in sustainable urban development and urban poverty reduction. Activities include actions at the global level, such as data collection, data analysis and reporting, and actions at the local level, which involve training and capacity-building to support the establishment and functioning of national and local urban observatories. The observatories are collecting, evaluating and analysing information on urban issues and advising local and central authorities on policy formulation. A new task in this area is the development and dissemination of tools for monitoring progress towards the slum-related target of the Millennium Declaration. One such tool is the just-published guidelines on using indicators for slum monitoring.

VI. Recommendations

38. Governments that are in a position to do so are encouraged to increase the unearmarked component of their contribution in order to establish and ensure the viability of the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation in its new and enhanced role. They are also encouraged to review UN-Habitat's innovative Partnership Agreement (see para. 12 above) to determine how it might fit into countries' development assistance programmes so that in this way they can support the work of UN-Habitat.

39. Governments are also called upon to incorporate the question of human settlements in their national development policy plans, as well as in their United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, poverty reduction strategy papers and other relevant plans for development activities.

40. Governments are also encouraged to facilitate partnerships at the national and local levels — among civil society organizations, youth, professionals, local authorities and the business sector — in implementing the Habitat Agenda and the relevant targets of the Millennium Development Goals.

41. Governments that are able to do so are encouraged to establish national urban observatories and to facilitate the designation of local urban observatories for the purpose of generating, collecting, organizing, analysing and reporting information on urban conditions and trends as an essential foundation for the formulation of national and local urban development policies.

42. Governments are encouraged to sponsor or otherwise facilitate the participation of representatives of the poor and vulnerable in the second World Urban Forum, to be held in Barcelona in September 2004.